(c) the precentage of concession in airfares in the Gulf route following the introduction of budget airlines and whether Government would consider any further relaxations or concessions thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Air India Express, a wholly owned subsidiary of Air India, propose to operate from Thiruvananthapuram to Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Muscat in the first phase.

(b) Air India Express is offering services to Dubai from Thiruvananthapuram via Calicut/Kochi. Besides, Air India would also continue to operate on Thiruvananthapuram-Dubai-Tiruvananthapuram sector as at present.

(c) Air India Express plans to offer fares up to 50% lower than the market fare depending upon demand and seasonality.

Bilateral Air Agreement with France

2804. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has amended its Air Bilateral Agreement with France to facilitate the private air carriers of India to fly to France;

(b) whether similar agreements are in the pipeline to allow the Indian private airlines to fly to other destinations of the world;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) how many bilateral agreements India has now with France following this amendment to Air Bilateral Agreement?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL) : (a) to (c) Existing bilateral air services arrangements with France were modified during bilateral air services consultations on 22-23 February, 2005 to enhance capacity entitlements for operation of air services and also to provide for designation of multiple airlines. Many of India's Air Services Agreements already provide for designation of more than one airline and such agreements do not need any modification for operation of eligible Indian carriers. Action is taken to amend Air Services Agreements not providing for multiple designation as

and when our eligible carriers evince interest to operate to the concerned countries.

(d) India has signed only one Bilateral Air Services Agreement with France on 16.7.1947, which has been amended from time to time during bilateral air services consultations, last of which was held in February, 2005.

Poor maintenance of private helicopters/aircrafts

2805.SHRI THANGA TAMIL SELVAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of frequent crashes of private helicopters/aircrafts in the recent times;

(b) whether it is a fact that poor maintenance is the major cause of these crashes; and

(c) whether Government will take suitable measures to prevent crashes due to poor maintenance?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir. In only two accidents from 2003 till date, maintenance of helicopter was the countributory reason.

(c) The DGCA ensures, on a continuous basis, strict compliance of safety norms by all air operators, including private operators by way of safety audits. Besides, spot checks on maintenance activities are also carried out by the DGCA. DGCA also keeps updating the Civil Aviation Requirements/Circulars to sterngthen aviation safety aspect.

Permission to China for use of Indian space

2806. SHRI LEKHRAJ BACHANI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether China has approached Government of India for allowing Indian airspace for flying its aircrafts over India;

(b) whether it is a fact that about 600 flights of China were to fly over Indian airspace;